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MENAGE à SIX

a literary magazine of the Lehigh Valley

Spring

As the last snow leans in on itself,
we walk the park -- the dog trailing us.
I wanted to show you a poem
the green reappearing -- buds, tiny eggs of color, lifting their heads our way.

But the day is still too chilly for color to surface
and wind snaps heads in another direction.

The bare trees are full of birds, thousands of birds.
The sky is black with birds -- the ground littered with
black bodies pulling thread from the earth.
They are stitching the sky together, preparing nests,
closing the door on winter.

The dog shoots after them. His path empties
the birds from their ground. A din of shrieks rises in their place.
It sounds as if hell has opened.

We came to the clearing looking for poetry, wanting to express our love,
but we cannot talk for the birds are flapping their wings.
We touch, but we do not think for the birds
are howling.

Michael Carey
Lafayette College

Winter Savage/ Summer Child

morning
I wake to tire tracks
in the snow
and a road that curves
and turns away
like a woman
cold
the loke hard-frozen
bitterly reflective
and quiet

standing
I breath frost from the air
exhale steam
and move
become the elements
alone and hard
a survivor

sunshine softens
and slows
I lean against trees
dreaming
watch the sky
become restless for warmth
a new kind of contact

spring
brings the women back
warm women in nothing
and next to nothing
clothes fall off by themselves
alive in their own dance
and I take what comes
dive deep
restless
and happy
and in hiding

Christopher Haring
Cedar Crest College

MENAGE à SIX

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She had looked up from her play in the morning cool dust. His shadow had fallen over her, and against the white sun, she had seen only a tall figure waiting over her, a darkening of the sun. She had shivered, and he had moved on. Now, she watched him from under her lashes as he wandered from the water fountain to the wooden lunch tables.

She moved silently, to sit with her back to the sun, and to keep him in sight. Brown dust rose, and fringed her white sweater. The boy stepped purposely, strongly and carefully, though his path was aimless. He was cautiously light; dead leaves crunched only softly under his feet. The sun glinted copper on his red hair, making him easy to follow as he walked through and around the nearly empty park. He carefully touched his right breast pocket. And then he turned toward her. She lowered her head.

His large feet, in their soft leather-moccasins, appeared in her shadow, standing on its face and shoulders. Her eyes were drawn by his, a steadily cold gleaming grey-blue. And she couldn't look away, she couldn't look away.

He moved off again, his strides shorter and tighter than before. She stood up, dust on brown corduroy, and walked quickly toward the water fountain. He followed her, touching his pocket. His eyes were fixed on her small brown and white shape and he trailed her without overtaking her.

At noon, she could leave, at noon, her mother would come. The sun was white and new; she had only been at the park a short time. She walked more quickly. No one was near the fountain and she passed it, searching for the people she had seen earlier - the girls playing catch, or the two men at the ping pong table under pavillion. The men were still there and so she sat on the pavillion wall, her arms holding her drawn up legs. Dressed in brown, she was unremarkable except for her eyes, something in her dark eyes. But she kept her gaze away from the men, and so they didn't notice her. Her eyes avoided the boy, avoided acknowledging him as he ranged around the pavillion, calmly, confidently pacing. After a time, the men finished their game. They gathered up paddles and balls, and left. And she ran, she ran toward the woods beside the park.

Watching her run, the boy took the metal slingshot from his pocket. Running, she wasn't at the fountain, she wasn't there, and her mother wouldn't find her. Entering the woods, she was white fleeing him. White, her sweater was white, and he would see it. She tugged it off and it took so long that she felt she had always been discarding this white thing.It flashed up as she flung it away, a white sweater tinged with dusty brown. His red head turned toward her and she saw his eyes, felt the pressure of his stare.

She ran quickly, lightly, on the dead leaves and dust, and he walked behind, picking bits of glass and wire from his pockets, fitting them to his slingshot.

It was hours till noon and she felt like she would always be running.

Julianne E. Means
Somerset College

Wild Geese

Naive sky and spring blue as winds roll
dawn the valley chilling the sunlight.
There is a time in early dawn which belongs to
neither the night nor the day but to
whoever sings loud enough.
Yet it is afternoon, and there is motion only in
the wind and in those objects wha care
to move with it
trees and a few pieces of paper, your hair.

And up from the horizon, a rambling arc
with the sunlight on its back,
a flock of geese is beating hard into the wind.
They approach a bit then
wheel off on a new track
into the same wind, shifting
rolling on the gusts
like scraps of parabolas.

Only now, perhaps, they see something
they've been looking for
and they run back and again
sweep toward us, closer
and call to us to make sure
we know who is coming.
Smooth dark bodies throwing wings at the air.
We should wave them toward us, beckon those
black necks and heads, blazed with white,
to where we sit.
But too soon the resolution ebbs
the geese look beyond us, luffing,
them come about and shuffle their arc
and run close-hauled at the wind and
away from us again.

They know their reasons
We should follow them
and learn what it takes to migrate
to lift heavy feet.
Fly among their winds
to an ancestral home in the North
that might be there
each spring when we returned.
And each ruffling stretch of air
would bring us
closer, if we believed, to a land
where last year's nests da not
pass with the folding dew or wither in the rain.

That is why they angle back and
forth across the sky
fixing their eyes beyong bluffs and valleys.
They disappear, living fragments of smoke,
into the wind that tosses your hair.

Brian Erway
Lafayette College

for Nanci

Sitting

I sit
on the back porch steps,
the weather eaten boards
splintering beneath my feet
casting
eerie symmetrical shadows
interrupting
the longevity of mine.

The white walk
through the center
of my yard
leads to the road
that winds around
my house, my world
and leads me
home,

Home,
where someone cut the grass
and dew settled
on the broken blades,
where honeysuckle climbed
the fence behind
the grey back daor.
where a cat pursued a rat
through the rose bush
at the end of the garden,

where I sat years ago
on the back porch steps
and wondered where
the white walk led.

Bim Angst
Cedar Crest College

To Myself

at four in the morning
when someone coughs somewhere
and commuters thrash in uneasy anticipation
the moon almost relfects itself on the cool green lawn
and the milkman delivers noise and daylight to the street
is when you need her

and maybe you go to the window
to search the street or sky
or maybe just lie there in the
not quite darkness and dream
of being here or fucking or Montana

and someday you just know you'll
be wounded stopping a hold-up
only a little wound, of course
and enough blood to get the job done
or find a woman who always smells good
and kisses you hard when she kisses

or probably just chuck the job
and hop on your cycle for a cross-country ride
to Montana
scared shitless the whole way
that it'll all be the same when you get there

Christopher Haring
Cedar Crest College

For My Sister, on Her Eighteenth Birthday

Amber is always
a few degrees colder than where it is.
A gem and not,
because it is only petrified sap
and some will say your eyes are made of it
clear dark resin, an insect
imbedded in the center
prominent and black.

Your wear your amber
like a shield and I am
fortunate to warm it in my hands.

Bim Angst
Cedar Crest College

Portland, My Dream

It hit me in the Christmas snows
that you and I were lovers
not yet in body,
but already fused in mind.
Those years we have behind us
urged me to send that card,
your answer made me flirt a little more.
But it's no game,
not after roses and a cross-country promise.
I'll wait
for the miles to fold over
so we can fall into each others arms
as Portland hits Philly
and Corvallis kisses Bethlehem,
colliding in the night.

Cheryl Winters
Lehigh University

The Wild and the Golden

From nowhere comes the flame.
Something takes shape hetween the eys of lovers.

As wild violets spark passion in fields of green,
as golden leaves draw death;
as solemn voices rush soft msdness through the air,
a musician's fingers tremhle in anxious clairvoyance.

The shape rises,
shadowed in shimmering fire.
The self in desire clutches at shadows,
plucks off the violet,
and dies the death of golden leaves
before death draws gold from pale dying yellow.

The not is struck,
colours catch it in mid-air.
Space empties to nowhere.
Voices fall into the vold
shaping the next madness.

From nowhere comes the flame.
Love rages between eyes of lovers.

From nowhere comes the flame.
Distance secures the passion of the violet.
With the touch, with the sound
made whole in the air,
another madness is over.

James P. Kain

I went to visit her.
We talked of what we did in the space hetween our last visit.
We talked of perceptions hehind our doings then.
We talked of the space between our last words spoken.
In the last space our eyes spoke.
We touched.
We talked of touching.
We talked of the trouhle that grows between us.
The trouhle grew.
We talked of leaving.
She asked that the space not he as long.
Trust had left us.
The unknown hugged itself hefore leaving.
The space.

Alhert Difilippantonio
Lafayette College

Dreams

[of finding truth]

To be a hird with
silver switchblade wings.
To slice satellites into
small congenial pieces.
To fly on dreams of
screeching beauty.

Greg LeRoy
Lafayette College

The Concrete Silo

so much depends
upon

a concrete
silo

cloaked with "top
Secret"

beneath the cold
sunshine.

Boh Cather
Lafayette College

Child's Art

Little Andy Callinan
Clenches a broken crayon in his hand
His tongue pressed firm against his lip
As he attempts to draw a man.
On a torn piece of manila paper
He scrawls a big square head
With a nose that appears to be broken
And a body that's underfed.
A pair of ears are sagging low
Below a clump of gnarled hair
The eye brows are thick and bushy
Yet the eyes aren't even there.
Four limbs that aren't finished
Because they lack both feet and hands.
Strange that it takes a child's art
To capture an honest man.

John Miller
Muhlenberg College

A Vinegar cruet

from
my grandmother's house,
its handle lost,
the surface there
smooth.
Flowers
exotic as dragons
painted orange
and green
on blue glass.

Filled with
the zinnias
saved from frost,
the cruet becomes
a vase
as useful
as a poem.

Carolyn Foster
Lehigh University

The Rooming Problem

The breeze has found its way across the room;
it chills me,
carring my, warmth
to Artic caves, caked with ice

I strive to hold on;
I need my heat
to ration as I can
to the coolest elements,
to raise their eyes in witness of
spring's promise
burning bright to jest the solstice

And still I suffer,
caught in this raw breath,
draining my resistance,
leaving me with fits and cold snaps
till I seem to the world
an ambassador of cold

Rob Sommerville
Lafayette College

The Nautilus Unchambered

BY
Sandra Matuska

10 P.M. ONE NIGHT

The ad in the magazine stared at her: "The eternity ring ... because it's a man's way of telling his woman that if he could, he'd marry her all over again."

She wondered what kind of marvelous ring a woman got when her man walked out because he couldn't cope. Surely there must be a very special ring. She felt the deep pain, the funny pain, again. She quickly turned the page.

There was a picture of relaxed and frolicking people on an eternal beach of white surf, sand and water. She gazed at them Maybe I need to get away. Just two days. He'd say she couldn't afford it However ....

She got up and foraged for maps of New Jersey and New York. Those were her closest eternal beaches. She had to smile. She scanned them for some place inviting and full of sea. She loved the sea He liked it. "It's okay," he'd say That was about as close to enthusiasm as he ever came about anything. She had begun to notice the pain shortly after he left -- with her permission, of course. That was necessary.

Continued from page 4

The 8 o'clock Movie

I am sitting in my car the other day at Fifth and Clover, waiting for the light to change, when none other than Harry the Hat runs up to the car and hops in. I am in quite a hurry to get to the dentist, as the pain in my tooth is unbearable.

Now this party that gets in is not the type with which t am usually accustomed to converse, as the grapevine has it that he is of shady character and notorious business. Anyway, this action really shocks me, but I manage to blurt out a "'mornin', Hat" as he settles down in the seat. All the while the light turns green and the car behind me gives me the honk. So I started moving to look over to my passenger who is in the process of lighting up one of those harmungous,* smelly cigars which was probably procured through some sort if illegal operation. "You don't mind if I smoke, doyou," he inquires. So I reply that the ashtray is on the door and that I just cleaned the car. With that, he flicks his ashes on the floor and says that he is terribly sorry. Bit I do not mind, as the Hat is a very large man with a quick temper.

We ride for a while without saying anything, so I finally get the courage to inquire as to his intentions. Well, he starts out with saying that he just got out of the slammer for attempted robbery and that his usually itchy fingers are "twitchin' like hell." The he tells me that I can help him, so I think things over for a minute, as I treasure my life and want to be living on my next birthday. So as not to upset the Hat, I say, "I am in quite a hurry to see the dentist, and my services are not of much value, anyway." Well, he reminds me that I am being contrary to his wishes by seizing my arm and twisting it. Naturally, I am swayed over to his viewpoint and say, "What can I do for you," to which he replies, "Stop at the next intersection." When we get there, he says,"Meet me here tonight at 7:55...don't be late and don't think about not showing up unless you'd like to end up swimming in the river with cement galoshes." He hesitates, hands me my watch, then gets out of the car and disappears into the crowd.

It turns out that I am late for my appointment at the dentist, so I call and make another appointment for the next day. Then I go home and get a beer out of the 'fridge. There is little else to do, so I turn on the tube and wait for 7:30 to roll around. The news is on a half-hour early, but I suppose it is some sort of schedüling problem, as the station is always having problems. The announcer says that Harold Watson, underworld figure otherwise known as Harry the Hat, was released from State Pen today and has not been seen since his release. The man further states that the authorities have reason to suspect that he has got a job already lined up, and I become scared and almost decide that this character is not to be dealt with. Then I realize that I cannot swim!

Well, 7:30 comes around rather quickly, and I find myself in my car, eventually pulling up at Nineteenth and Vine at 7:53. Two minutes later I see Harry the Hat walking more than somewhat quickly towards me, and he has a canvas bag in his hand. He jumps in,and when I ask him, "What's next," he tells me to drive south on Vine for a few blocks, which I do. Then I ask what we are going to do, and what he plans for me. He tells me not to ask questions, but does tell me that there is a money incentive to this operation, providing that it is successful.

I start to mention the TV broadcast, and Harry quickly tells me that I did not hear it correctly. Naturally, I agree with him and continue by asking what we are going to do. I am somewhat confounded, naturally, when he tells me we are going to see a movie. "You got the choice of flicks," he says, then adds, "and The Windsor is having a good western tonight." Well, I say that I am quite partial to westerns, and agree to see it. We get there, and the Hat takes an extra-special long time in paying the ticket-lady. The thing that gets me is that he has paid for my ticket. Now this is truly against his religion, but I do not mention it to him.

Right in the middle of the film, which is not too hot, he starts fumbling around in the bag he has. At the end, he reaches into the bag and hands me a wad of green stuff, which I quickly put into my pocket. Then he says for me to say nothing to anyone about this, and I assure him that my lips are sealed. Then he gets up and walks out of the theater without waiting for me.

The next morning the keepers of the peace come to my apartment before I am awake. They take me down to the station, where I see the Hat in the interrogation room. He winks at me and looks at the clock I remember what he tells me the night before, and then I look at the clock Comparing it with my watch, I find that I am thirty minutes slow, so I adjust my watch to the correct time.

Well, this dumb, old desk sergeant yanks me into the room and starts giving me the fifth degree about this big bank heist the night before at Eighteenth and Vine. I suddenly realize that this is where that Hat got all the dough, but I fail to mention it to the cop. He says it was at eight o'clock and that Harry has given me as an alibi. So I tell the cop that we saw the movie at The Windsor, and they go and call the ticket-lady She is really cooperative and tells the "man" that she specifically remembers us, and that we were slightly boozed up. She also tells him that we were there for the previews and all, which started at eight sharp. Well, the cop apologizes and lets us go, but warns Harry to be careful

Harry just smiles and says good-bye to the men in blue I follow and catch up to him on the steps, and t ask him about all this He smiles and puts something into my hand "Here is an extra ten for your troubles," he explains He walks off, leaving me speechless, but turns around and yells back, "How about another movie next Week""

*Harmungous is an invented word to mean huge & ugly

Richard Saunders
Moravian College

What Next

stomach's hungry been drinking coffee this early morning November two 1975 thinking of you dying six years ago this time another hour

so insignificant dropping away from humanness as though something unncessary dropping on first floor tenement crapping and vomiting on final side street of Cohoes New York

big drop near Irene's Beauty Shop from this Life into blackness where planets move like music no streelights no Tommy Edward's singing favorite "There Was a Boy"

small room dim light of Universe numbered 32 Seneca Street this time Sunday forty-seven years brought you to through jungles whispers sidewalks and thin corridors of mind

sounds of slippered feet you always heard rising like discords from blue earth in middle of sleep

strange bird in strange flight carrying nothing but wierd song with peckered bill and soul/yet left memories moons rising over Germansville ground I do not want to die on or be buried under

down road hear volunteer firemen talking through megaphones autumn throats getting ready for next fire yet houses woods people everything burning in usual silence

here six years after hour of your life-giving stunt my mind wheels back like mad bicyclist without hands no seat recollect particulors as do same every year every town/Cohoes Dayton Allentown village Germansville

always here at precise time missed once because drunk and crying entire night felt final breakdown final release only blood looking back so far then turning

sometimes even eating crackers or half-times of Knickerbocker's basketball game or about to take long shit recollect particulars of your spending forty-seven years on this planet wondering what was Cohoes or cobble stones or Falls where people jumped into abrupt silence

you with muscles and eyes like scruffy bird looking for fabled hickory nut in far gone Arctic

you who looked like Ben Shahib in first silent movie on desert riding dusty-assed water-sacked camel into lunar distances of grains

you in 1952 baby-blue Oldsmobile Disneyland combo mon of Bluebeard and Mickey Mouse living with private wicked witch of west/tap dancing on every bar top harmonica in mouth in Cohoes where the Hudson and Mohawk rivers meet and meet

you buying beers for everyone in house with twenty-seven cents and trying to catch rabbits with bare hands near library in woods during winter of fourth decade in this blue and green world

you father of blood and penis and legs and hard and drunken sonofabitch feelingthat just missed last connection last caboose of youth standing on tracks watching Great Pennsylvania Railroad move away with all I ever saw of God

you drunk and mad tap dancing and ploying with self in gray pants walking down Ontario street like every male in family in this wondering- void/asking what the hell is Cohoes or cobble stone or abrupt silence

last night in Pennsylvania milder than New York or Ohio made first prayer to One Being I hope is Truthful and not bullshitter/first prayer in five years made for you madhatter

folded old dreams like fresh beautiful leaves green and sticky last night admitted moybe there is a God and in these twenty-eight year lungs of branches opened up and let peaceful wind come through

asked that you not be bored/not stuck in just one place underground/that Being make greatest harmonica store and longest walnut bar in this Universe and that you sing for once like Tommy Edwards all your favorite songs

asked that it be remembered once on Olmstead Street you fought Block Angel over an hour/Goldengloved him to fire hydrant January morning and pissed on him and left him to cold night urine freezing

that you went home to tell parents and drink at sixteen and whipped Satan/what next

Len Roberts
Northampton County Community College

The Nautilus Unchambered

Continued from page 3

The pain. It was a strange pain. It seemed to begin somewhere in her wrists. It spread into the palms of her hands and her fingers, and then she would become aware of the clenched knot in her chest. She laid boards over depths of swirling green hurt, but some of the wood had splintered lengthwise and hung dangling in the turbulence.

She returned to the map. There was a place at the end of Long Island. She'd worry about reservations when she got there.

She almost ran into the bedroom and dragged her suitcase from the closet shelf.

• • •

The moon was pale, a translucent and luminous wafer, pasted irreverently and carelessly on the gritty blue sky. It hung – diluted pink lemonade – shading its way toward orange. The traffic began to crowd her, pressing her into her car and into herself. New York suddenly moved in around her.

It was getting hard to see through the bug-and-dirt-stained windshield. She turned on the wipers and pushed the button that pumped a chemical onto the glass in rhythmic, pulsating squirts, like an artery of the car's body suddenly cut into.

A fun-shaped view of New York emerged. Lights – siren and glittering – appeared through the streaked window, a world of carnival-roped bridge lights and sunset-gentle blood stains carpeting the river below. The change-makers at the bridge's toll could be carnies, she thought.

He'd say irritably, "What are you talking about? It's only a city – like any city –and a polluted river." That's what she hated about him.

And she'd say, "Yes, I guess you're right."

And that's what she hated about herself.

• • •

She was lost, irrevocably lost. The hell with it, she might as well eat. The damn green stuff was spewing up through the splintered boardwalk, and she wanted to get something into her stomach before her throat closed.

A Howard Johnson's finally came into view. She wheeled into the lot. She had no idea where she was. He'd say that it was typical of the haphazard way she did everything. She supposed it was true. All she knew was that she was irritable and weary beyond belief.

The sign read "Wait for the Hostess to seat you." She stood, eyeing the nearest empty booth. All she could see were two waitresses and a cashier. She fidgeted from foot to foot, becoming annoyed. Where was this invisible hostess? Finally, exasperated, she headed for the empty booth, only to be stopped short by a blowsy, middle-aged waitress with bleached cottony hair. "Didn't you see the hostess?" she snapped.

"No, I didn't," she retorted angrily. She returned to her place, now furious.

The waitress bent to whisper in the ear of the cashier as she passed her. "I can't be everywhere at once," a high-coifed brunette whined as she rang up checks, dropping change in her haste. It dawned on her that the hostess was also the cashier, mired at the register.

At long last she was shown to the booth she so easily could have sat in ten minutes earlier.When she picked up the menu, she noticed her hands were shaking. And when she realized the blowsy blonde was her waitress, she wanted to sit and cry for an hour.

She ordered a perfect bourbon Manhattan, up. "You Do know what a perfect Manhattan is?" she asked, just in case. She had been given the wrong drink too often.

The question was an added affront to the waitress. "Of course," she answered, casting her a look that made her wish she'd never asked. She noticed the waitress' name tag read Edna.

When she returned, Edna waited to see how the drink was.

"It's fine," she said, ignoring the large Maraschino cherry bobbing in the drink instead of the lemon twist it should have been. "Really good." She swallowed hard.

She ordered soup, fried clams and french fries, and sucked desperately on her Mahattan as the green stuff pushed up around her chest and throat.

To divert herself, she eavesdropped and stared into people when they weren't looking. After a time she gradually became aware, she wasn't sure how, that the waitress was only efficient and brusque, not really snappy. She began to admire her skill in balancing dishes, taking orders, answering questions and offering suggestions – a fencer and parrier of the mundane.

When Edna came for her order, she took a deep breath and asked, "Have you always been a waitress?"

Edna's head jerked as though she'd been short-circuited, "Why do you ask me that?"

"Well," she faltered, "You seem so efficient ... so ... capable ...."

"I've just been here a couple of years," Edna said. She looked directly at her, and made no move to leave. Then she added, "I've done a lot of things – I've flown airplanes and I've taught school, and now I'm doing this."

"When did you fly?" she asked.

World War II – fighter planes. All over the states."

There was a silence. Flying planes she thought. Teaching school. My God.

"Why are you doing this?" she asked Edna abruptly.

In the space of the waitress' short answer, the restaurant seemed to pale and move back. "I have to," she said. "There are two children."

She stared mutely at Edna.

"I got a divorce a year ago," the waitress added.

"My husband left," she told Edna, the words slipping and sliding over one another, hurling themselves through the open spaces to drown, "He doesn't know what he wants. I can't give him any more of me. He might want to come back, but I don't know if I can take it." She stopped, horrified. What was she doing?

Edna knew. "I couldn't," she said simply.

The restaurant gained life and color and moved back.

"I'll have another one," she said, handing the empty glass to Edna, the cherry solitary on the glass bottom.

Edna smiled. "I'll make it for you myself," she said.

She was strangely comforted.

10 A.M. THE NEXT DAY

She woke up, comfortable, struggling her way out of a sticky web of bad dreams, horrible dreams, strange dreams.

There had been a large building, much like her old high school, a geometry class she had cut too many times, an endless round of damaging electric storms and forbidding skies – ugly yellow-grey swirls of vengeance seen through the windows as she and others huddled, unbelieving and frightened, against a space of wall.

She remembered rumors of spirits who existed in the building – had been seen. The rumor was that the dead really lived. There were rooms of dying people in the building – white-sheeted figures being eaten with cancer, consumed with large suppurating wounds turning their white gauzy swathing endlessly crimson. The people would disappear overnight. They were believed to have been seen in the building.

Every time she came close to piecing together more of the mystery, the storm would come again – massed, ugly and yellow-grey. Huge forks of lightning sought out dark corners of the building with wicked and ear-shattering intensity. She know it was seeking her out. It began hitting parts of the building–violently tearing chunks of concrete from walls, smashing relentlessly through window which spintered in deadly-bright projectiles to find her. In following her, it would destroy everything and everyone around her as she fled, running bunted and fear-sweated through the halls to escape ...

She frowned. Swinging her feet to the floor, she decided she might as well get up anyway. It was going to be hot. Still frowning, she wondered at the dream's hold on her. She felt chilled and frightened.

• • •

She lay on the sand listening to the sea sounds and a phrase ran through her head: I am Who am. Wasn't that what God had told Moses he was? But wasn't she "Who was" also? Maybe a little "w" instead of a capital. But

Continued on page 5

On Tuberculosis and Babies

I took my Wednesday pill
but why
the three of you and me
makes four [?]
I cannot separate
my mind, body, heart
they run together
indistinguishable
like the hours in the night
before you reached out and asked for me
and I responded
with sweet odors and sticky hands
perpendicular
I ended at your thighs
but you continued through me
he never did
and the other I went beyond
to reach out into the black with my sweaty feet
until it was too cold
and I had to cover them
my leg ached
hurt
with the weight, the damp
until the pain in my back was too great
and I knew it was done
and lay tight and hurting
next to you
but you did not know it hurt
did not know what I had forced you to do
and I coughed up rusty phlegm
my belly full of you
my Monday night pill making sure
it was not a mistake.

Bim Angst
Cedar Crest College

hospital . . . night . . . holding my incisioned stomach . . . i step . . . along a carpeted hallway . . . distant nurses voices . . . i step at windows . . . out there . . . out there is the night . . . under street lights tiny messages speed . . . through . . . a network . . . of wires . . . further . . . messages pass . . . from galaxy to galaxy . . . further . . . lies the sender of all messages . . . so far beyond . . . sending messages to itself . . . skin hot with fever. . . back in bed . . . sixth week . . : home soon . . . puzzled doctors . . . this is funny . . . tiny television with earplugs . . . special on manson . . . murder rituals . . . my skin is hotter . . . they're not obsessed with their own confusion . . . news bulletin . . . president for was shot . . . squeaky . . . nurses shoes . . . flashlight . . . i am in tune with my fever . . . i predict an all time high . . . i told you . . . to the thermometers end . . . i giggle . . . bodies in white run . . . in and out . . . of my room . . . someone talks . . . i think to explain something . . . i am cooperative . . . i am stripped . . . sheets of ice . . . below. . . on top of me . . . bags of ice . . . under neck arms crotch . . . teeth keep a spanish beat . . . disco beat . . . a tango ice breath . . . seventy year old room mate . . . watches on . . . tears in his eyes . . . i hope he will walk again . . . no hope . . . he drifts off . . . eyes half shut . . . groans . . . invisible speech . . . "do you remember the tits that one had . . . i told ya a stiff prick has no conscience . . . uh . . . whaddya mean . . . whaddya mean you're dead . . . o god . . . oh god i'm talking to a dead man . . . don't take me yet lord . . ." deep voice quivering . . . "though i walk, through the valley of the shadow of death: fear no evil . . ." a woman screams from across the hall. . . flashing lights . . . unbearable loud noises . . . i throw out my arms . . . scream for help . . . nurses said my body just stopped convulsing and my eyes slowly opened . . . so that was a seizure . . . hospital . . . night . . . old charlie mumbles . . . working in georgia . . . nineteen twenties . . . friend said . . . wiskey . . . black people . . . we went into the swamps . . . drums . . . dancing . . . blacks dancing . . . going wild . . . screaming . . . trances . . . voodoo . . . i ran . . . friend laughed . . . hospital . . . night . . . withering bodies . . . healthy nurses . . . with pills . . . and needles . . . they pinch me in the ass . . . i pinch them . . . they understand . . . six weeks . . . young man . . . acceptable desires . . . hospital . . . night . . . ice blankets off . . . fever broke . . . old man still breathing . . . i walk along the carpeted hallway . . . stopping at windows . . . i see . . . messages . . . in the stars so far beyond . . . so deep within . . . deep within this incisioned stomach . . . the doctors could not see . . . any messages there . . . they could not see the process . . . the process of . . .

my scars are vanishing . . .

Albert Difilippantonio
Lafayette College

The Nautilus Unchambered

Continued from page 4

still .... Heresy? Then her life might have to be heresy. She squinted.

The preimeter of her mind, illumined by the sun through her lids, had been featuring a continuous rerum ol her life with him -- bad and good. It was odd. The moving strip was cut into squares, just like developed camera film, but colored, and always moving.

Where the hell was the projectionist? If he wouldn't shut the machine off, she'd smash it.

The two people in the filmstrip were mechanical and accommodating. She looked intently into the squares. Where was her animation? Hiding...hiding.

The sun politely withdrew. She opened her eyes. The sky was mostly grey and much lower than it had been. It was going to rain.

• • •

She sat alone at the dinner table, gazing out the window. It was next to the water, and in spite of the torrential downpour, it was still light enough to see the surf pound the rocks through the reflection of the hurricane lamp. The effect was rather neat, she thought. The flame's steady orange heat and the water's charcoal turbulence were both hers.

The host had been so concerned and obsequious when he realized that she was dining alone that she had to stop herself from laughing aloud. "Are you expecting someone?" he asked, certain of the usual reply.

"No, I'm not," she answered, surprised that she valued the fact.

He seemed thrown off balance, but recouped and led her to the table, saying grandly, as though it were a consolation prize, "You may have the best seat in the house."

And so it was.

She speared another scallop hiding under the crisp bacon slices and marveled at bow delicious everything tasted. Even her roll seemed mother-earth bready and fragrant.

She splurged and ordered a Cherri-Suisse after dinner and then stretched, relaxing like a large well-fed cat. Had she been one, she probably would have kneaded her paws on the restaurant carpet, she thought.

A long slender guilt wound around the table and lifted its head to look at her. She gazed back, fascinated,half-willing to let it coil about her. But, somehow, she found herself too comfortable to do that. It slipped back somewhere out of sight.

• • •

There was no doubt about it. It was she. Every bit of her breakfast was as good as she remembered food when she had stopped smoking – full of the zestiest, hardiest flavor and imbued with the subtlest and most wonderful tastes.

The drenching rain had continued unabated. Somehow she wasn't surprised.

As she stepped from the restaurant, the evocative and tangy wet sea-earth smell struck her. She stopped. Then she deliberately inhaled, it seemed to her, to her toes. How old had she been when she last could smell like that?

The more she breathed, the more it filled and enveloped her with a strange and primitive sensation.

She felt as though she wanted to run to the store to buy a coloring book and crayons and simultaneously felt something grow in her -- something that felt as though it had stepped into clothes of just the right size. It felt good. I felt god-awfully wonderfully terribly good.

Had he been there, he never would have smelled it. Or felt it. Or even have wanted to.

Abruptly she realized something. Had he been there, she never would have smelled or felt either. But she would have wanted to.

• • •

She sat under the overpass, one of a long line of cars and motorcycles that had pulled over. She watched the patterns of drumming rain as heavy traffic roared by. She stared at the tar road. The splatter-drops were black on the reflective water-white surface. As huge trailer trucks sped by, they cast large shadows across the road and turned it into a negative of white splatters on black.

She could sit in her car, and watch that. Or drive. Or ... anything.

• • •

She had driven to the now deserted ocean's edge, where the sea churned green and grey.

She watched the rain pounding the sand, hardly noticed. She watched the rain jeweling the ocean's surface, losing itself in the process. The rain wasn't depressing at all. Who needed sun with a rain so glorious?

She took off her rain-bonnet and folded it neatly. Then she took off her sandals and rolled ber blue jeans up under her raincoat.

She started walking on the black-topped pebbly road. It loomed in front of her, mixed with the rain and the ocean and the toe-deep smell – all the potential that existed for her in freedom, all the responsibility and awful absoluteness too.

And she wanted it.

She started to run. "Me," she said aloud. "I." She kept saying it as she splashed madly, capriciously and happily into every puddle she could find.

"Hey lady," a voice called. "Where's the board-walk?"

"Don't you know," she called back into limitless depths, licking the salt raindrops from her lips, "You don't need one."

And she laughed and hiccoughed -- and cried -- and lifted her head to meet and search the beautiful terrible formless fog that was rolling in over the sea. It would soon hide the familiar.

Love

I stand here
looking out the window of the third floor
at 7 am
wondering how I managed to kiss
the wrong guy
at 2 am

no one else is up
I have room to take things down
look at them
I have room at 7 am that I never asked for

the mechanism that decided last night
to spin the bottle
forgot to look inside
I turn my head, I stand here
slowly waiting for the right cue
so that, for once,
I can curl up
and sleep.

Linda Norton
Cedar Crest College

DISCORDIA

"Famous for rolling the Apple of Discord"
[Dictionary of Classical Mythology]

Is it so unusual
for one who enjoys
preparing and eating
Waldorf salad
to imagine herself as
Discordia:
that advocate of the perfect fruit,
the golden object
that started it all.

Look how the apple
predominates. Behind
the apple is a woman:
a new name
for each new mythology
but always Discordia,
always the same story
told by a man.

I'm writing this poem.
If you consider necessary,
beware of the bowl
of apples I bear.

Carolyn Foster
Lehigh University

The Flower and the Bee

(on injustice)

Pink from a distance but,
With streaks of crimson when close,
And fragrant as freshly cleaved fruit, hung
Closer, the petals hang like powered wings,
I reach out to touch the flower.
With the speed of shock, I am stung,
Pain pierces up my finger to the brain,
The agony outrages!
I tear the flower from its life-earth, shred,
And crush it, it a molten flash.
A bee flies untouched from the bowl.
The flower lies on the ground, bleeding, dead

David W. Berry
Muhlenberg College

The morning sun rose over brown and burnt-out land. Tumbleweeds drifted by, and small swirls of dust danced with the hot, heavy breeze. The air was thick with the smell of blood.

A dozen wild mustangs lay dead, caked with dirt and blood that stuck to their cooling sweat. The eight men were just finishing their mugs of steaming coffee, a few were stamping out the campfire and pulling their gear together. Rifles slung over their shoulders, they all walked slowly towards the horses, admiring their size, and complimenting each other on their skill. "This should be enough to keep a hundreds dogs well-fed for a while." The sticky, tobacco-chewing man smiled as he said it, then emitted a gutteral laugh. "The goods from these'll keep us warm all winter-no need for wives this year boys!"

The others laughed, loud and boisterous, then brought out the ropes and tied up their kill.

Eight men in four open trucks came rumbling through the town, shotguns blasting upward in triumph, horns declaring victory. They wound their way through deserted streets; all the stores and houses were closed up. But that was understandable. Everyone would be at The Ranch, waiting to see if their town would survive through the winter.

The town was built around The Ranch and its owner, who was also the owner of the huge horsemeat factory inhabiting the mass of cold steel that sat just half an acre away from neatly plowed fields. Without his financial aid, only given on receipt of the necessary raw materials, the town would ceast to exist. As it was, The Man owned most of it anyway.

"When The Man sees these twelve beauties, you bet your life he'll be smiling from here to the bank. There's plenty more where these came from."

"It sure is strange though. I ain't never seen it so quiet. Even on roundup days. Sure as hell gives me the creeps."

"Oh hush. It's just that everyone was so scared seein' how The Man kept sayin' that we'd never last the winter. It got everybody to thinkin' and lots were beginnin' to believe that we'd come home empty-handed. But we've done it, right boys!" It was the tobacco-chewer again, and he yelled his last sentences back to the others. Some whoops of agreement came in reply.

Now they slowed down as they turned onto the paved road of the Ranch. Everything was strangely silent. The corrals were empty, no rush of people came to greet them with yells and cheers, no one, nothing; only The Man, coming slowly towards them from his Ranch door, arms extended, a broad grim on his face. Looming behind him, the steel giant glistened and seemed to smile in the bright sunlight. And why not? Smoke was rising contentedly from its twin stacks. The men stared at each other in amazement. before the first horses were brought in? Impossible!

No, not really. The dogs' taste in meat was more sophisticated that year.

Cheryl Winters
Lehigh University

For Being Black

My mother apologized from birth
for being Black
She sloved three hundred years, in order to pay the price
for being Black
My father was emasculated
for being Black
They were beaten, crucified and lynched, but survived
because they were Black
We've laughed, cried and died, a thousand times
for being Block.
We fought all our lives
In order to compensate
For our greatest defeat, Blockness.
But I'll be damned, if I'm going to
repeat the history of my forefathers.
So let the world know
I was not born with defects
And I shall not apologise
for being Black.

Johnny King
Muhlenberg College

Rage

When lumberjacks, like fote, cut to the heart
Of standing grove oaks, the last tree's leaves shake
A stormy promise; the naked monarch's knots
Twist steel cursing men refusing to break
Till black cloud lightening strikes the thick limbs part
And sovage painful final power screams
The burning to fall and pound the Men.

Black, bloody mulch.

The last Plantagenet, King Richard Third
Beheld the bastard boy of Tudor blood
His Englond's heart at Bosworth Field and shook
With fury the waste of English lives
That serpent had cut Richard's ranks away
With treason; Stanely and his kin foresook
Their king while Percy lay low in the rear.

For sake of men.

Alone to stop the waste, and fate, with death,
Refusing Harold's stand of oak and iron,
King Richard gambled everything to fall
On Tudor, like a wounded eagle screams
And dives to rip bloody faces below,
The monarch knots his fist with Sampson's grip
Around the pillar handled battle-axe.

The column moves.

Companions rode the way Richard blazed block
With fury at the waste Tudor bore through
His guards and standard bearing dragon red
Twist of steel cursing men refusing to break
The block cloud Richard strikes the thick limbs part
And savage painful final power ends
With rolling thunder fallen to the ground.

Black, bloody mulch.

John McHaffie
Lafayette College

While Ice Skating

On ice is happened.
At once all was, at once
still yet fluid,
frozen in balanced precision.
The thought was unnerving
but no thought purged the stream.

Blue was blue
in the sky clouds defined white
separation.
Sun was not sun but
mad in spears of yellow-red
enough to blind starkly, coldly.

Trees held their breath
in determined stares;
their needles a timid green,
compacting inaction.

All action was mine or
against mine.
I blazed, not with fire, but
with streaks of white, scraping,
in streams of penetrating history,
the ice cold surface -
the superficial hardness that wasn't always this way.
It now defined nowness.

Surely, I moved on a silver line,
tight, tense, the tenseness
demanding more speed.
The cold, cold breeze challenged every motion,
'All should be still,'
Still I move in a stream unyielding.
The breeze massed force
in polar reaction
blasting stillness sharp and full
into my face.
Skin cringes
mucus freezes,
cold isn't cold anymore.

The faster I moved
the sharper the pain,
until it wasn't pain.
It was stark, it was hard,
It was white and blue and green.
It was the path I cut in the hard, white ice.
Thin lines impressing their history in the breeze of a frozen, still frozen landscape.

James P. Kain
Lafayette College

FOG

I am a blind man since the fog has come.
Inside my grey walled sphere, the Mother feasts
My lungs. I drink the silken spices, numb,
Stroked by the cool hands of this gentle beast.

The dust is ours and we create the real.
She builds the shapes with which we play charades;
I must imagine what the forms conceal
And paint the scene to animate the shades.

There is no light and shadow in this place,
No time. The water, earth and air are on,
And I must add my fire to join my race,
Because I die, my living is begun.

My father gives me sun fire from the sky
By day, Tonight, my mother tells me why.

John McHaffie
Lafayette College

One person breathes quietly
wondering what the breath will bring
it floats, disappears from his mouth
one breath gone, empty airs
powder the brain, move quietly on

He speaks. Others watch, breath freshly forming
in their mouths. Airs cross motions,
unseen. Mouths read their own movements.
He watches her lips, soft leathers
weaving a pattern he wants to follow

She sends waves of breath across his throat
he catches them in his ear and keeps them
close to find when he breathes in the morning
alone.

Linda Norton
Cedar Crest College

Five Days

I remember
a january
when snow fell
from the oldpeaked roof
heavily thudding to the ground

the cold air
seep through my coat
as is stood
waiting
  waiting
for more
and she came
  screaming
through empty corridors
resounding in my ears
building
  building
in intensity
and i waited
  waited
for more
and . . .

i remember
the stream -
as it wandered
through the ice
and my brain
searching
  searching
for the answer
and my fingertips frozen
thawed

Alan Wolfe
Muhlenberg College

Midnight on Lake Michigan

notes from a truck

Waist deep in summer's waters
I rock, gentle as the tide,
hugging my knees to my chest.

The moon staggers into clouds
and I lie like a seashell on a shore off Lake Michigan,
A fog darkens everything to a grey silhouette.

Far inland, small houses
imitate the stars that will not come out.
Houses, stars, they've seen this night before.

They must know the cold I'm floating in,
how my brain wants to sleep,
wants to sink and fall calm in the water.

But only I know
how the truck slowed and bucked when I came over the lower hill,
how I shut down
with Potasky just an hour away.

Oh,
how I wanted to leave work!
the endless maze of maps,
the wipers that won't clean,
the tires that melt.

I wanted to hide my truck in foliage
and come down to the water alone
to that dark peace I've seen of the lake
when the moon streaked across it
and the air did nothing, revealed nothing.

But sitting here is like sleeping in a calm fountain -- the water just ready to wake.

Nothing moves except to eddy around me,
yet, even those small stirrings remind me,
of streams of water, red flashing cornfields, black tar, white lines,
and faces white faces.

Michael Carey
Lafayette College

The Founder, Colonel Elders

The statue stares across the quiet square,
And children, passing, feel the founder stare
At them. They wonder, sometimes, what he sees,
Alone on his stand, while icy gusts freeze
The streets beneath a halting quilt of snow . . .
Some days, the mercury and lights sink low,
And white, cold cotton makes prodigious brows
More prodigious still, and more pensive now
Than those of a melancholy ghost
Saluting those alive - a mocking toast.
The snow is deep: his hair goes grey to white,
To form the profoundest, most piercing sight
That Elders" Bend might offer any man . . .

Across the ground he paces, his daughterland,
He stares, and sees "descendents" run the town;
All winter though he stares, and staunchly down
Till spring, when snow melts slowly down his eyes.

The children often wonder that he cries.

Scott E. Densen

Falling Asleep

last night i could not sleep

i sow them come
one by one

out of the bush
ond onto the dirt

faceless, smooth ond silent

lover by lover
they lay in rows
bone on bone

loin to loin
they stretched to the horizon
faceless, plowing

ond nothing grew, nothing fell
to that strange rocking

then it stopped -- dirt hushed over them
it was the slow turning that closed their eyes

Michael Carey
Lafayette College

Legacy

my great grandmother was fifteen
when my grandmother was born
and grandma was sixteen
when she had my mother
Mama was seventeen
when I first breathed
now I'm eighteen
and you, my love, my daughter,
are already heating your red wrinkled
fists
against the inevitable.
do you already know, I wonder
that we're depending on you?
the women in our family, my daughter,
have always heen highly intelligent
and we've always married young
in order to pass our intelligence
(and frustration)
to as many daughters
as possible.
you mother
your grandmother
your great grandmother
your great great grandmother
we all look
at you.

Hope O'Keefe
Lafayette College

The Waterfall

If I could tear your eyes from their sockets
and bend their insides back,
I would throw them at a cascading wall,
A waterfall of black:

Where they'd spin, they'd twirl, they'd take in the world.
In a wonderwind of life
they would suck at all sights. Colours and forms,
they would cut like a knife,

only, bleeding would have to wait,
there's no time to bleed.

A fall is a trip through colour and space:
Green, red! gold, flash! blue, flash!
Flash! Time is the cry of forms flashing by.
There's no time for the slash

of pain to singe at the center, because
the center, the vortex,
is there, somewhere, singeing the sky; alive

And shaping again a new form.
There's no time to wait.

James P. Kain
Lafayette College

L'envoi

I should very much like to say goodbye,
Goodbye to Elders' Bend-
And up with the geese that pass each year
I would silently ascend,
Till far, far gone on some peaceful marsh,
As silently, I would descend . . .

I should very much like to say goodbye,
Goodbye to the lonely old men;
I have seen them sitting there,
Foolish, in the park, and wondering only when
McCormick would sit down --- by them.
I should like to say goodbye, as I, hove watched
The haze-eyed sages gaze out, and then
Motion foggily to tell me
Of the chances they have missed,
Of the girls they should hove kissed . . .
I will hear them and then go my way,
I will make the same mistakes ogain,
And miss the some chances they missed one day . . .
And will not know just what to soy . . .
I only wish that I could say goodbye,
Stand and feed with the pigeess, and then ascend,
And for ever pass silently away . . .

I would say goodbye to the children there,
The young, who grow up all alone,
Who cannot hear, and live unaware
Of the hopes that were lost, that will never be found
They, too, grow old, and try to speak.
I have seen their faces grow foreworn with care.
I have seen, them grow, grow up, grow old
With their eyes frozen solid, by the cold,
Without tears. I wish I could go anywhere

The flock goes up ond out below the clouds,
Gray moving under gray, agoinst a shroud;
Up the sky the mass ascends,
Each of the thousands toword its end . . .
I with that I could soy goodbye,
And go with them, ond then silently descend.

I would soy to the old women, goodbye-
For they meon more to me than all the rest;
I have seen them, like the men, grow vague and die
After giving the world their painful best.
They mold the world's children, and wonder why
The world is less than what they made.
Under the stotue I see them go,
There on the benches, I see them sigh,
Feed the pigeons in the pork
And ponder that it seems so dark,
This lonely, stifled world of theirs,
Where darkenss knows, and nor one cores.
They have learned the reasons why, as have their mate
As have their mates, and would tell me-
But then, when they try,
I do not understand, how they are right,
But only why they sigh . . .

Away from the tired buildings ond walks,
Awoy from the soft, warm lights,
Awoy from the ageless grandfather clocks,
Awoy from the lonely nights . . .
I should very much like to say goodbye,
Goodbye to Elder's Bend,
And up with the north-bound geese one year
I would silently ascend,
Till, for, far gone, on some peaceful marsh,
I would as silently descend.

But I have grown, grown up, grown old,
To the marrow of my bones gone cold,
And, cold, will reach my end.

Scott E. Denson
Lafayette College